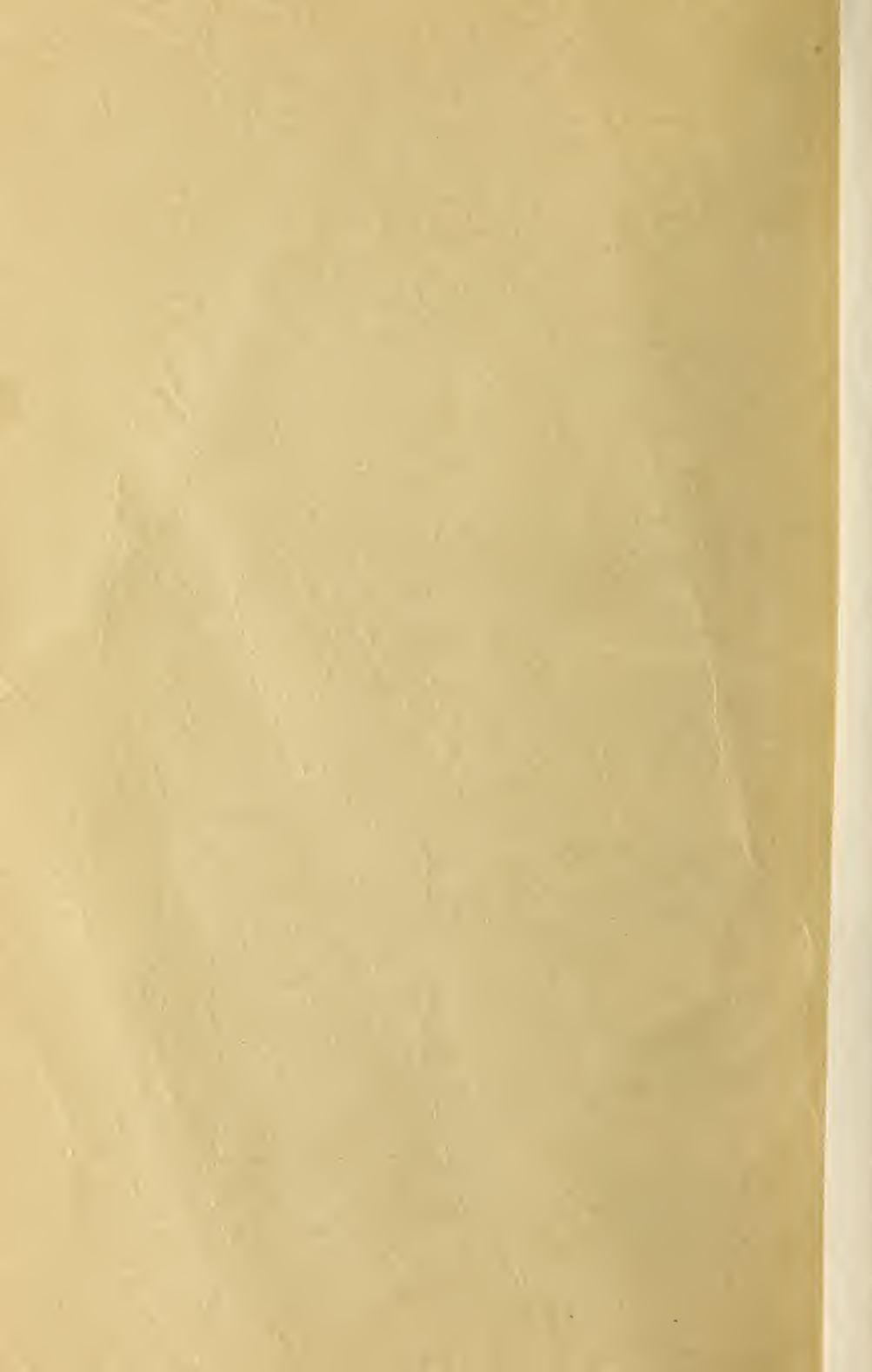


# CORNELIS STEENWYCK

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*J. C. Webster*

COMPLIMENTS OF  
**J. C. WEBSTER**  
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CANADA







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CORNELIS STEENWYCK  
Dutch Governor of Acadie

(BY COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY)

CORNELIS STEENWYCK

DUTCH GOVERNOR

OF

ACADIE

BY

JOHN CLARENCE WEBSTER

A PAPER READ AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CANADIAN  
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# CORNELIS STEENWYCK

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In 1674 the two years' war of England and France against the United Provinces came to an end, a pact of peace being signed at Westminster, Feb. 9, 1674, six months after the Dutch re-conquest of New York. In early summer of this year Captain Jurriaen Aernouts, of the frigate Flying Horse, stationed at the Dutch Island of Curacoa in the West Indies, was commissioned by the Dutch Governor, in the name of the Prince of Orange, to attack the enemies of his country, viz., England and France, news of peace made with the former not having reached the island. Sailing north he arrived at New Orange (New York) in the first part of July. There he learned of the peace and of the impending restoration of the province to the English. He, therefore, decided to attack the French possessions in Canada, as his country was still at war with France.

While preparing for his expedition he met Captain John Rhoades of Boston, an experienced pilot, who was well acquainted with Acadie and who urged Aernouts to attack it, emphasizing its wealth in forests, fisheries and fur-bearing animals. This decided the Dutchman, and, enlisting the services of Rhoades and several other Americans, he sailed for the Bay of Fundy. On August 1, he captured the French Fort at Pentagoet, (Penobscot) destroying it and taking M de Chambly, Commandant in Acadie, prisoner. At the same time he buried two glass bottles in the earth containing a copy of his commission and an account of his conquest, in the name of the Prince of Orange. He then continued up the coast ravaging the small French settlements, and sailed up the river St. John to the French Fort at Gemisick (now Jemseg), which he captured taking prisoner the commander M. de Marson, lieutenant to M. de Chambly. He again buried bottles in the earth containing papers similar to those buried at Pentagoet, and took possession of the country for the Prince of Orange, naming it New Holland.

He then sailed to Boston, where he announced his conquest. Citizens who had been accustomed to trade and fish in Acadie applied for permission to continue their operations. This was refused but it made no difference to the Bostonians, and they continued as usual in their old enterprises. In the autumn Aernouts sailed away leaving Peter Roderigo, Cornelis Andreson, Captain John Rhoades and John Williams, a Cornishman, all of whom had sworn allegiance to the Prince of Orange, in charge of Acadie, Rhoades being in command. These representatives of Dutch authority returned to Acadie to engage in trade and to hold the country until a Dutch government should be established, having at their disposal two small armed vessels.

It was not long before they came into conflict with Boston traders and fishing vessels, several of which they seized, furs and other arti-

cles found on board being confiscated. These seizures caused much excitement in Boston and Governor Leverett sent armed vessels under Captain Mosley to attack Rhoades and his associates. A fight took place in the Bay of Fundy, the Dutch force being beaten and taken to Boston, where they arrived on April 2, 1675. Being considered as pirates they were kept in prison pending their trial. The trial resulted in the condemnation of the leaders to death. However, the death penalty was not exacted, and they were pardoned, Rhoades and others being required to leave Massachusetts.

When the Directors of the Dutch West India Company heard of the conquest of Acadie they acknowledged the services of Rhoades and on September 11, 1676, authorized him to hold Acadie and to carry on trade, paying duties to the Company. On October 27 the Company issued a Commission to Cornelis Steenwyck of New York to possess the new territory and to administer it as governor in the name of the Company and the States General of the United Netherlands. They did not interfere with Rhoades's prerogatives but made it clear to him that he was to be subordinate to Steenwyck and to act as his lieutenant and advisor.

Steenwyck apparently did not visit Acadie nor take any steps to assert his rights or authority, and very soon the French were again in possession of the country. At this time, of course, Steenwyck was a citizen of New York and under English rule, and he must have regarded his status as preferable to the empty honor of a distant governorship unsupported by forces of the country which claimed jurisdiction in Acadie. Indeed, he must have been aware that the French were again in full authority there. His appointment is however, an indication of the esteem in which he was held by the Dutch government.

Captain Rhoades tried to establish himself again as a trader in Acadie, but in so doing interfered with the prerogatives claimed by the Duke of York in the territory which is now part of Maine. He was arrested in 1678 and sent prisoner to New York. The West India Company petitioned the States General in his behalf and the Dutch ambassador in London was instructed to take up his case with the government, asking for Rhoades's release and indemnification on the ground that Acadie was Dutch territory and Rhoades an agent of the Dutch Government. The English authorities directed an inquiry to be held and considerable correspondence took place between the governments. Rhoades was released in October 1678 and moved to Delaware where he was made a Justice of the Peace.

In the same year the Treaty of Nymwegen brought peace between France and the United Provinces, but it made no mention of Acadie nor of Dutch claims to authority there. Their action on Rhoades's behalf is the last historical record of the claims of the Dutch Republic to the exercise of jurisdiction in Acadie, which for the brief period of four years they had regarded as a Dutch possession, acquired by conquest, and designated New Holland by their accredited representative.

It is interesting to note that the Commissions to Cornelis Steenwyck and Rhoades still exist, being in possession of the New York His-

torical Society. Translations of these are given in the Appendix, through the courtesy of the Society.

These documents clearly establish the regular and official character of Aernouts' expedition to Acadie. In conformity with the practice of the time, his capture of Pentagoet and Gemisick, the two leading French strongholds in the country, as well as of the Commandant and his Lieutenant, accompanied by his proclamation of his conquest under the authority of the States General of the United Netherlands and his bestowal of the name "New Holland" on the conquered territory, must be accepted as a well-established episode in the history of Acadie. By most Canadian authors it has been ignored or regarded as a mere piratical raid. Thus, Beamish Murdoch, usually a most careful writer, is wholly in error in his description, referring to it as the raid of a Flemish corsair, whose name, he states, is not known. Murdock was evidently in complete ignorance of the official documents in which all the data may be found sufficient to establish the true nature of the Dutch exploit.

It is interesting to note that, in the Commission of the Dutch Governor, the conquered territory is designated as "Nova Scotia and Acadie." This inclusion of the name used in the grant to Sir William Alexander half a century before, and employed for a very brief period, indicates the thoroughness of the Dutch officials and their determination to leave no doubt as to the extent of country which they claimed by right of conquest.

What, now, is to be said of the man, Cornelis Steenwyck, selected by the Dutch Government to be Governor of New Holland?

The following account, giving the main outline of his career, is based upon a study of New York Colonial and Dutch records, mentioned in the list of references appended to this paper.

I am greatly indebted to Mr. Victor H. Paltsits for his valuable assistance in directing me to sources of information.

Cornelis Steenwyck migrated from Harlem in Holland to New Amsterdam in America about the year 1652. Being possessed of capital he established himself as a trader, acquiring vessels and developing relations with Virginia, the West Indies and Europe, the export of tobacco being an important part of his business. He rapidly accumulated wealth and rose to a position of importance in the town.

In 1653, the English and Dutch were at war and the authorities of New Amsterdam, fearing an attack, built a wall across the Island of Manhattan at the northern limit of the town. From this defensive work the name of modern Wall Street has been derived, and from this landmark we are able to form a very exact estimate of the size of New Amsterdam in the middle of the seventeenth century. Funds were raised to build the wall by a special tax levied on the citizens, Steenwyck's share being a large one. In addition he advanced considerable money on loan to enable the work to be completed, and he was not reimbursed for many years.

Steenwyck went to sea at times in his own vessels, and on one occasion on arriving from a voyage he was reported by one Jan Adamson as having been seen kissing the wife of a prominent citizen in some



bushes near the harbor, being described as a sailor from a vessel which had recently arrived. This report led to a slander suit (1756), a record of which still exists. Steenwyck took a prominent part in the government of the town, and held various offices between 1658 and the year of his death in 1684. He was mayor on several occasions.

In 1664 the second war between England and the Dutch Republic broke out and an English expedition was sent to New Amsterdam by Charles II and the Duke of York. It successfully attacked the town and as a result the Dutch province became an English possession under the name of New York. The year previous, in anticipation of hostilities the authorities had selected Steenwyck to go to Holland to solicit assistance. He agreed but delayed his departure to put his affairs in order. This required so much time that when he was ready it was considered useless for him to leave, and it was decided to send a letter to the Lords Directors of the Honorable West India Company of Holland, an organization which exercised great influence in the New World, asking for aid. This letter was signed by seven members of the Town Council, of whom Steenwyck was one. The year 1663 was a disastrous one in the annals of New Netherland. Besides the great anxiety caused by fear of an English attack, there was disaffection in Long Island; Connecticut was urging a readjustment of boundaries, claiming a considerable portion of the Dutch province; floods and earthquakes destroyed much property, and various Indian attacks were threatened. The government was in bad financial straits and Steenwyck came to the rescue advancing 12,000 guilders on the security of a lien on the brass cannon in Fort Amsterdam (situated near modern Bowling Green).

After the English conquest the first Deputy-Governor of the Duke of York's domain was Richard Nicolls, who established a new government. The Dutch seem to have accepted the new régime with resignation, seeking only to be allowed to carry on their former pursuits without disturbance. Soon after the new occupation we find that the town authorities of New York forwarded a letter to the Duke of York which was written by Cornelis Steenwyck, praising Governor Nicholls as a "gentle, wise, intelligent governor, under whose wings they hoped to bloom and to grow like the cedars on Lebanon"; at the same time they prayed for the same commercial privileges which pertained to His Majesty's subjects in England. The government rapidly became anglicized, Dutch names being replaced by English. In 1668 Nicholls resigned with the goodwill of everybody and was succeeded by Colonel Francis Lovelace. His first Council was held at Fort James (formerly Fort Amsterdam), Cornelis Steenwyck being present as Mayor of the town.

In 1670 the triple alliance of England, Sweden and Holland was dissolved and England in alliance with France declared war on the Netherlands. In 1671 Steenwyck was appointed acting Governor for a time during the absence of Lovelace in Virginia. In 1672 excitement developed over the war news from Europe and Lovelace took active measures for the defence of his province, raising a volunteer force of considerable strength. Steenwyck was made captain of a troop of

horse and was sent to Albany to put it in a state of defence. In the following year he was appointed Counselor of the province "to assist in the direction of all cases relative to justice and police and further in all such military concerns both by water and by land in which the governor shall deem proper to ask his advice and assistance",—evidently a very responsible position. In July of this year while Lovelace was absent in Connecticut a Dutch fleet arrived off New York and very soon captured it, the English garrison being weak; there was a loss of only one man on each side. Thereupon, the province was declared again to be Dutch and a new government was established. Names were again changed, New York becoming New Orange in honor of the Prince of Orange. Captain Anthony Colve, who had captured the town, was made Governor, and Cornelis Steenwyck became his first, and, for a time, his only Councillor. Peace was made between the Dutch and English governments in 1674 and New Netherland was again restored to England, though the New Orange Dutch had sworn that they would hold the province "by fighting so long as they could stand with one leg and fight with one hand." The Treaty was proclaimed at New York in July and the worthy burghers subsided without trouble, Colve turning over the government to Major Edmund Andros, who had been sent out as Governor by the Duke of York. English names were restored and an English administration and laws again established.

In the spring of 1675 the Governor and Council passed an ordinance which stated that all persons who wished to remain in the province must take oaths of allegiance to the King of England. Eight leading citizens, including Cornelis Steenwyck, agreed on condition that Andros would assure them that the terms of surrender of 1664 would not be invalidated. The Governor refused and the eight men objected to take an unconditional oath, again demanding recognition of the articles granted by Governor Nicholls regarding freedom of religion and exemption from impressment in time of war. When this also was refused they asked that, at least, they might be exempted from taking up arms against the Netherlands, or should be allowed time to dispose of their property and move without molestation whithersoever they might decide to go, promising in the meantime to be obedient to the government. This was not granted and they were arrested and imprisoned in the fort, afterwards, being released under bonds to appear at the next session of the Court of Assizes.

Steenwyck was then chosen to send an appeal to the States General of the United Netherlands asking the government to intercede on their behalf with King Charles of England. The Dutch ambassador in London brought the case to the attention of the Duke of York, and, as a result, Andros was notified to treat all persons in New York with "all humanity and gentleness consistent with "the honor and safety of his government."

The eight men were soon afterwards brought before the Court and one of them, De Peyster, submitted taking the unconditional oath. The rest held out and were charged with defying His Majesty's laws in refusing to take the oath of allegiance, and in trading while being

foreigners. Being found guilty their property was confiscated to the Crown. This caused them to submit and agree to take the oath of allegiance, their action being generally followed throughout the province.

Thereafter, relations improved between the Dutch and English residents of New York, and after the marriage of William Prince of Orange to Mary, daughter of the Duke of York and heiress to the throne of England, in 1677, the Dutch became quite reconciled to English rule. Cornelis Steenwyck continued his business career and became one of the wealthiest and most influential citizens of the province. In 1683 as a member of the Council of the Town of New York his name is found on a bill presented for the purpose of making a gift to the Governor. He was charitable, upright and religious, and gave the Manor of Fordham for the support of ministers of the Dutch Church.

He was married to Margharetta De Riemer in the Reformed Dutch Church of New York, June 5, 1658, and had seven children, all of whom predeceased him. He died in 1684.

The original portrait of Steenwyck is owned by the New York Historical Society, through whose courtesy I am enabled to reproduce it.

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# APPENDIX

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## APPOINTMENT OF CORNELIS STEENWYCK,

as

## GOVERNOR OF NOVA SCOTIA AND ACADIE

THE DIRECTORS of the privileged General West India Company of The United Netherlands.

ALL THOSE who shall see or hear these Presents,  
GREETING!

KNOW, that we being convinced that the wealth of this Company would be greatly increased by the cultivation of those lands and places under the jurisdiction of our aforesaid grantees, and that it will be useful that these aforesaid lands and places should not remain uninhabited, but that somebody be duly settled there, and populate the Country, and afterwards thinking on expedients by which the navigation commerce and traffic of the aforesaid Company, and of all others who belong to it may after some time be increased and augmented; so is it that we wishing to put our useful intention in execution for the aforesaid and other reasons by which we are persuaded; following the second article of our aforesaid grant, and by the authority of the high and mighty States General of the United Netherlands, and upon mature deliberation of the Council, have committed and authorized, and we do commit and authorise CORNELIS STEENWYCK, in the name of and for the High and Mighty and the Privileged General West India Company, to take possession of the Coasts and countries of Nova Scotia and Acadie, including the subordinate countries and Islands so far as their limits are extended to the East and North from the River Tountegonet, and that he Steenwyck may establish himself there, and select such places for himself in order to cultivate, to sow, or to plant, as he shall wish.

MOREOVER to trade with the Natives of the Country and all others with whom the Republic of these United Netherlands and the aforesaid Company is in peace, and alliance, to negotiate and to traffic in the goods and merchandises belonging to them, send them hither and thither, and fit out ships and vessels for the large and small fisheries to set the cargo ashore, to dry and afterwards to sell them, so as he



shall think it best; and generally to sustain and to maintain himself and his family, by no other than honest means.

MOREOVER, that he, Steenwyck, in the name of the High and Mighty, and of the General West India Company, will be admitted to make contracts and alliances and engagements with the natives of that Country; also to build some forts and castles, to defend and to protect himself against every foreign and domestic force of enemies or pirates; and also to admit and to protect all other persons and families who wish to come under obedience to the Company, if they swear due faithfulness to the much esteemed High and Mighty as their highest Sovereign Magistrate, to his Highness, My Lord, The Prince of Orange, as the Governor Captain, and Admiral General, and to the directors of the Privileged West India Company.

THAT MOREOVER, the aforesaid Steenwyck with the Title and power of Manager and Captn will provide, deliver and execute every thing that belongs to the conservation of these countries, namely:—The maintenance of good order, police, and justice as would be required according to the Laws and manners of those countries; and principally that the true reformed christian Religion is practised within the limits of his district, after the usual manner; that Steenwyck, according to this may place some one—if he is a free born subject of our union—in his office, who in name, and authority moreover, with the title and power as aforesaid, may take possession of the aforesaid Countries to establish himself there; and further, to do and to execute all those things whereto Steenwyck himself in aforesaid manner is authorized; all those things nevertheless without expenses, charges, or any kind of burdens to the Company, and with the invariable Condition, that the aforesaid Steenwyck or the person whom he might place in his office, will be obliged to execute the present Commission and authorization, within the next eighteen months; or, that by negligence or failure thereof it will be in our faculty and power to give such a Commission and authorization to other persons than Steenwyck, or his Lieutenant, without any reference to this present one.

MOREOVER, we have the aforesaid Steenwyck or his Lieutenant, so soon as they establish themselves within the limits of that particular privileged, and conceded district, and we do privilege and concede freedom and immunity of all rights and recognizances for the time of six years successively.

AT LAST, and to conclude that the aforesaid Steenwyck, or his Lieutenant, within the limits of the aforesaid district will have the right to distribute to others such Countries and places for colonies and farms, as he shall think best; and that the managers and principals of those Colonies and farms, for the time of six years, shall be entirely possessed of the aforesaid rights and recognizances.

We command and charge also, our Directors, Managers, Captains, Masters of Ships, and all our other officers who may belong to them, that they will have to acknowledge, to respect, and to obey the aforesaid Cornelis Steenwyck, or his Lieutenant, as Manager and Captain,



within the limits of the aforesaid district; and, to procure, to give, and to afford him every help, aid, and assistance, in the execution thereof, seeing that we find it useful for the service of the Company.

Given in Amsterdam

October, 27th, 1676.

Signed  
Gaspar Pellicorne

For Ordinance of the aforesaid Directors  
Signed

C. Quina.

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## LETTER TO STEENWYCK SENT WITH HIS COMMISSION

MOST Honourable, Valiant, and honest beloved faithful!

In answer to the remonstrances of your brother in Law Nicolass the Gouverneur we have thought convenient to send your honor the enclosed Commission, and authorization, being the permission to take possession of the Coasts and Countries of Nova Scotia, and Acadie, so far as its limits are extended from the river Pountegouet to the East and North, in the name and upon the authority of the High and Mighty States General of the United Netherlands, and the privileged General West India Company, conforming all such conditions as your honor will see himself, by reading the aforesaid Commission.

But our intention is not to prejudice a Commission of the 11th of September last, given to John Rhoadé, a Native of England, who was helping to conquer and subdue the aforesaid Coasts and Countries in the year 1674 under the direction of Captain Jurriaen Arnouts. A Copy of that aforesaid Commission is herewith as witness for you.

We have commended the aforesaid Rhoadé to give you honor, from time to time his advice in regard to the State of affairs, and as to what could be done for them by virtue of our aforesaid Commission, and we hope that it will be observed by him.

Moreover, we ask and desire eagerly, that so soon as your Honor, shall have taken possession of the aforesaid lands, or may have sent somebody there in his name, you will tell us the State of affairs there, and also what kind of business could there be practised with gain and advantage; also let us know all those things which you may think advantageous for us to know.

If afterwards there should be found any minerals on any places, then we wish that your Honor will send us some samples, with and besides your opinion and advice in order to decide upon it. Finally,

we Command your honor to do all that which may increase the wealth of our Company.

Wherewith finishing, we Commend you to the protection of GOD.  
Amsterdam

October, 27th, 1676.

(Sign)

Gaspar Pellicorne.

For Ordinance of the aforesaid Directors

(Sign)

C. Quina.

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### POWERS CONFERRED ON JOHN RHOADE

The Directors of the Priviledged General West India Company of the United Netherlands.

TO ALL THOSE who shall see or hear these Presents—Greeting!

KNOW, that WHEREAS, in the Year 1674, Captain Jurriaen Aernouts, Master of the Frigate, “The Flying Horse” from Curacao and charged with a Commission of His Highness the Prince of Orange, has conquered and subdued the Coasts and countries of Nova Scotia and Acadie, in which expedition was also present and assisted with advice and force JOHN RHOADE—THEREFORE, WE, after consulting the demand of aforesaid Rhoadé to establish himself in the aforesaid Countries, and to remain there and to maintain himself, have consented and permitted and do consent and permit hereby that the aforesaid Rhoadé, in the name and by the consent of the General West India Company shall take possession of the aforesaid Coasts and Countries of Nova Scotia and Acadie, in whatever place of that district it may please him to build houses, and to establish, cultivate, and to keep in repair plantations, that he may have and negotiate with the natives and all others, with whom the State of the United Netherlands and the aforesaid Company is in peace, and alliance; in the first place to send hither and thither his own goods and merchandizes, after paying the duties to our Company; in the second place to defend and maintain himself against every foreign and domestic power of enemies. Also we charge and command our Managers, Captains, Shipmasters and all other officers in the Service of our Company; and we request that all persons who do not belong to our Company, not to trouble, or to disturb the aforesaid Rhoadé; but after shewing this commission to assist him in the execution thereof, and to give him all help, aid and assistance.

Given in Amsterdam  
September, 11th, 1676.

Sign

Gaspar Pellicorne

For

The Ordinance of the aforesaid Directors

(Signed)

C. Quina.





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